



4 Simple Steps to Keep You and Your Baby Healthy

Bacteria can cause foodborne illness; however, infections caused by *E. coli*, *Listeria*, *Salmonella*, and *Toxoplasma gondii* are often preventable using four simple steps. **Clean, separate, cook, & chill. Enjoy a healthier pregnancy for you and baby!**

1. Clean

- Wash hands thoroughly with warm water and soap.
- Wash hands *before* and *after* handling food, and *after* using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling pets.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and countertops with hot water and soap.
- Rinse raw fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water.

2. Separate

- Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from ready-to-eat foods.
- If possible, use one cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and seafood and another one for fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Place cooked food on a clean plate. If cooked food is placed on an unwashed plate that held raw meat, poultry, or seafood, bacteria from the raw food could contaminate the cooked food.

3. Cook

- Cook foods thoroughly. Use a food thermometer to check the temperature. See the [Apply the Heat Chart](#) for the recommended cooking times for foods.
- Keep foods out of the Danger Zone: The range of temperatures at which bacteria can grow - usually between 40° F and 140° F.
- 2-Hour Rule: Discard foods left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours. When temperatures are above 90° F, discard food after 1 hour.

4. Chill

- Your refrigerator should register at 40° F or below and the freezer at 0° F. Place an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator, and check the temperature periodically.
- Refrigerate or freeze perishables (foods that can spoil or become contaminated by bacteria if left unrefrigerated).
- Use ready-to-eat, perishable foods (dairy, meat, poultry, seafood, produce) as soon as possible.

Use of these habits [↑] may decrease the likelihood of foodborne illnesses like:

E.Coli - A bacteria that is normally present in the gastrointestinal system of people

Listeriosis - An infection that may result when foods containing the bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes* are consumed

- *L. monocytogenes* is widely distributed in nature and is found in soil, ground water, plants and animals
- Especially dangerous because the bacteria grows at refrigerator temps
- *Prevention:* Easily destroyed by cooking

Salmonella - *Salmonellosis*, is a type of food poisoning caused by the genus of bacteria Salmonella.

- *Salmonellosis* is unpleasant enough, but the effects of salmonella during pregnancy can be serious and even life-threatening
- *Prevention:* Avoid contact with an infected animal or infected foods

Toxoplasmosis - An infection caused by the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*

- Passed to humans by water, dust, soil, or through eating contaminated foods
- Cats are the main host for *T. gondii*, and the only host where the parasite can complete its life cycle. *T. gondii* may be carried in the fur or feces of cats and then passed to other animals and people
- An infected animal is then eaten raw or undercooked, passing *T. gondii* to the human or animal that consumes the meat
- *Prevention:* 4 Simple Steps + recommend cat owners ensure the litter box is changed every day, preferably by a friend or family member

FOOD MYTHS AND FACTS OF HOME COOKED MEALS

Put Heat on Harmful Bacteria

1 in 6 Americans (48 million people) suffer from food poisoning each year, resulting in thousands of hospitalizations and deaths.



MYTH

"If I microwave food, the microwave kills the bacteria, so the food is safe."



FACT

HARMFUL BACTERIA MAY REMAIN

Harmful bacteria may remain if food heats unevenly. Be sure to follow cooking instructions including rotating, stirring, and letting food stand when indicated.

MYTH

"I don't need to use a food thermometer. I can tell when my food is cooked by looking at it or checking the temperature with my finger."



FACT

YOU NEED TO USE A FOOD THERMOMETER

Color, texture and steaming are not indicators that a food is safe to eat. The only sure way to know food is safely cooked is to use a food thermometer.

MYTH

"I can't re-freeze foods after I have thawed them—I have to cook them or throw them away."



FACT

RAW FOODS MAY BE SAFELY RE-FROZEN

If raw foods have been thawed in the refrigerator, they may be safely re-frozen without cooking for later use. Never re-freeze foods that have been thawed in the microwave or in cool water. Never thaw raw foods by letting them sit on the kitchen counter.

MYTH

"Of course I wash all bagged lettuce and greens because it might make me sick if I don't."



FACT

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WASH PRE-WASHED GREENS

While it is important to thoroughly wash most fruits and vegetables, if packaged greens are labeled "ready-to-eat," "washed," or "triple washed" then the product does NOT need to be washed at home.

4 STEPS TO FOOD SAFETY

CLEAN



SEPARATE



COOK



CHILL



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Figure 1. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/40986460@N02/800383877>

Food Choices During Pregnancy

Table 1. Choose safer foods during pregnancy, while avoiding foods from unsafe sources.	
Instead of...	Choose
Cold hot dogs, deli meats and luncheon meats	Hot dogs, luncheon meats and deli meats <i>reheated</i> to steaming hot or 165F
Raw or undercooked meat and poultry	Fully cooked meat and poultry
Raw or undercooked seafood	Fully cooked seafood
Refrigerated smoked fish and precooked seafood such as shrimp, crab and deli seafood salads	Tuna, salmon and crab meat in cans or pouches (limit 2 servings/week)
Refrigerated pâtés and meat spreads	Canned or shelf stable pâtés and meat spreads
Raw sprouts and unwashed fruits or vegetables, including lettuce/salads	Cooked sprouts; Well washed fresh vegetables, including salads; Cooked vegetables
Soft cheeses made from raw milk such as Feta, Brie, Camembert, blue-veined cheeses, queso fresco, queso blanco and Panela	Hard cheeses, processed cheeses, cream cheese, cottage cheese, mozzarella, and soft cheeses made from pasteurized milk
Raw or undercooked eggs	Pasteurized eggs or eggs that are cooked until the white and yolk are firm
Raw (unpasteurized) milk and milk products	Pasteurized milk and milk products
Unpasteurized juice (May be called “fresh squeezed” or “chilled”)	Frozen concentrate, canned juices and refrigerated juices that are labeled as pasteurized

(Dean & Kendall, 2012)

Additional Resources:

Food and Drug Administration (2022 May 3) Food safety booklet for pregnant women, their unborn babies and children under five.

<https://www.fda.gov/food/people-risk-foodborne-illness/food-safety-booklet-pregnant-women-their-unborn-babies-and-children-under-five>

References

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